

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7074

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1995

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SHUM, IS, SY, US

SUBJECT: LETTER TO PRESIDENT FORD FROM MELKITE-GREEK
CATHOLIC PATRIARCH ON ARCHBISHOP CAPPUCCI

1. SUMMARY. LETTER FROM GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH TO
PRESIDENT FORD REQUESTS U.S. INTERVENTION ON MATTER OF
PRISON TREATMENT OF ARCHBISHOP CAPPUCCI IN ISRAEL. END
SUMMARY.

2. MELKITE-GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH, MAXIMOS V HAKIM,
HAS REQUESTED EMBASSY TRANSMIT FOLLOWING LETTER TO
PRESIDENT FORD. QUOTE:

WE REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT OUR ARCHBISHOP, HILARIAN
CAPPUCCI, WAS BEATEN AND INSULTED BY ISRAELI SOLDIERS ON
MARCH 15, 1976, IN RAMLEH PRISON WHEN HE DECIDED TO
RECOMMENCE HIS HUNGER STRIKE TO OBTAIN AN AMELIORATION OF
HIS DETENTION.

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WE STRONGLY PROTEST THIS VIOLATION OF INTER-

NATIONAL LAW.

WE REQUEST YOUR IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION SO THAT THE NUMEROUS DECISIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS MAY BE IMPLEMENTED AND OUR ARCHBISHOP CAPPUCCI LIBERATED. SIGNED - MAXIMOS V HAKIM, MELKITE-GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST, OF ALEXANDRIA AND OF JERUSALEM. END QUOTE

3. LETTER WAS ACCOMPANIED BY EXCERPTS FROM LETTER FROM ARCHBISHOP CAPPUCCI TO THE PATRIARCH WHICH LATTER SAID HE HAD RECEIVED VIA POST FROM AMMAN. IT HAD, APPARENTLY, BEEN SMUGGLED OUT OF RAMLEH PRISON. LETTER, WHICH PATRIARCH CLAIMED WAS IN ARCHBISHOP'S OWN HANDWRITING, RECOUNTED ARCHBISHOP'S HUNGER STRIKE WHICH HAD BEGUN ON JANUARY 28, BEEN TEMPRARILY SUSPENDED ON FEBRUARY 25, AND RENEWED ON MARCH 15. ARCHBISHOP CLAIMED THAT WHEN HE HAD REFUSED TO GIVE UP HUNGER STRIKE, PRISON DIRECTOR AND FIVE SOLDIERS HAD FORCIBLY ASSAULTED HIM, BEATEN HIM, AND

TORN HIS CLOTHES.

4. PATRIARCH TOLD EMBOFF, TO WHOM HE DELIVERED LETTER, THAT CAPPUCCI HAS NOW SERVED TWO YEARS OF THE TWELVE-YEAR PRISON TERM TO WHICH HE HAD BEEN SENTENCED UNJUSTLY BY ISRAELI COURTS. HE SAID CASE WAS CAUSING SEVERE AND UNNECESSARY EMOTION AND HOSTILITY AMONG GREEK CATHOLICS, MANY OF WHOM RESIDED IN ISRAEL, AGAINST ISRAELI AUTHORITIES. HE REFERRED TO OTTOMAN DECREE DATING BACK TO MID-19TH CENTURY WHICH ALLOWED PRELATES CONVICTED OF CRIMES TO BE RELEASED TO CUSTODY OF THEIR RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS. SAID HE HAD SENT MESSAGES TO ISRAELI AUTHORITIES OFFERING TO COME TO ISRAEL TO TAKE CUSTODY OF CAPPUCCI BUT THEY HAD REFUSED TO RECEIVE HIS EMISSARY. ADDED THAT HE THOUGH CAPPUCCI SHOULD BE EITHER CONFINED IN ONE OF SEVERAL CONVENTS IN ISRAEL WITH ISRAELI GUARDS IF REQUIRED, OR EXPELLED IN CHURCH CUSTODY.

5. PATRIARCH SIAD HE INTENDED TO VISIT U.S. NEXT SUMMER TO PARTICIPATE IN RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES AND HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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ALREADY SUBMITTED REQUEST TO BE ALLOWED TO PRESENT A BICENTENNIAL MEDALLION TO PRESIDENT FORD ON BEHALF OF 100,000 GREEK CATHOLICS IN U.S. SAID HE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO BESTOW ON PRESIDENT THE CHURCH'S HIGHEST ORDER OF CHARITY, "THE COLLAR", AT THIS TIME. ADDED THAT HE INTENDED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIS PRESENCE IN U.S. TO VISIT GREEK CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES IN SEVERAL STATES.

6. TEXT OF LETTER BEING TRANSMITTED VIA POUCH.

MURPHY

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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